

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 13, 2007

LONG BEACH BREAKWATER RECONNAISSANCE STUDY

File No. 07-090-01
Project Manager: Christopher Kroll

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$50,000 to the City of Long Beach to complete a reconnaissance study of a possible reconfiguration of the Long Beach breakwater.

LOCATION: San Pedro Bay, City of Long Beach, Los Angeles County
(Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Aerial Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Historic Photo](#)

Exhibit 4: [Letters of Support](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31111, and 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to the City of Long Beach to complete a reconnaissance study to determine if there is a federal interest in a reconfiguration of the Long Beach breakwater. Prior to disbursement of any Conservancy funds, the City of Long Beach shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a final work program, including schedule and budget, for the project; and the names and qualifications of all contractors to be used for the project.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

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“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria in Chapter 6 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270, as amended) regarding the enhancement of coastal resources.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last adopted by the Conservancy on September 20, 2007.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

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Staff recommends that the Conservancy provide a grant of up to \$50,000 to the City of Long Beach (City) to help fund a study of the Long Beach Breakwater to reconfigure of the breakwater in an effort to improve water quality in San Pedro Bay. The study will follow the U.S Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) model of a reconnaissance study the purpose of which is to determine if there is a “federal interest” in a reconfiguration of the breakwater. Typically, reconnaissance studies are paid for entirely by the federal government but the City has been unsuccessful in securing federal funding for the study. This study will be the first step in determining whether it is possible to have the federal government share in the cost of modifying the breakwater. There is very strong local interest in completing this study, so the City now wishes to fund the study in partnership with the Conservancy and work with the Army Corps to produce the required documents per the Army Corps’ reconnaissance study format.

The Long Beach Breakwater was constructed by the federal government in the 1940s as the final section of an 8.4 mile long breakwater which extends across San Pedro Bay. The breakwater is federal property under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps. There is some disagreement as to the purpose for which the Long Beach Breakwater was constructed. The Surfrider Foundation and others have maintained that the Long Beach Breakwater was constructed specifically to protect U.S. Navy facilities in Long Beach and since those facilities were shut down in the 1990s the Long Beach Breakwater section of the larger breakwater no longer serves its purpose. Others have argued, however, that the Long Beach section of the breakwater was constructed to protect shipping at the Port of Long Beach and is unrelated to the former Navy facilities. But there is universal agreement that the breakwater has eliminated surf from the Long Beach shoreline and resulted in poor water quality and much-reduced beach use compared to other nearby beach towns.

Possible benefits to the Long Beach shoreline and San Pedro Bay from reconfiguring or sinking the Long Beach Breakwater include improved water quality and improved habitat. Surfrider has proposed three alternatives to “sink” or “reconfigure” the breakwater all of which would remove the top 20-30 feet of rock from portions of the 60-foot high breakwater. Surfrider argues that reducing the height of the breakwater and reconfiguring the rock removed from the breakwater could improve water quality and other conditions in San Pedro Bay by 1) allowing better tidal circulation; 2) returning “moderate” surf to the shoreline; 3) restoring sand to the eroding

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Peninsula neighborhood located between Alamitos and San Pedro bays; 4) creating an offshore artificial reef; and 5) restoring kelp beds which previously existed in the area.

A concern has been raised that removing portions of the breakwater does not address the root cause of poor water quality in San Pedro Bay, the oil, grease, fertilizers, animal waste, etc. draining from the Los Angeles River and San Gabriel River watersheds into the bay. While this is true, it should be noted that the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board has been aggressively pursuing the development and implementation of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits and total maximum daily load limits (TMDLs) for the waterways of the Los Angeles region. The Regional Board has already adopted trash and metal TMDLs for the Los Angeles River and a bacteria TMDL is presently in development. The combination of reintroducing tidal action to San Pedro Bay while also addressing upstream pollution may go a long way to improving the environmental health of the bay.

Concerns about the cost and possible negative impacts (e.g. increased beach erosion, potential damage to property, disruption of port operations by higher surf) of the Surfrider proposals have been raised by several parties, including the Port of Long Beach and residents of the Peninsula neighborhood. Having weighed these concerns with the potential benefits, the City Council voted on July 24, 2007 to proceed and fund a reconnaissance study of the breakwater reconfiguration.

Both the City and Surfrider Foundation have approached Conservancy staff to assist the City in funding the reconnaissance study. The City intends to hire a consultant to produce a study consistent with the reconnaissance study format provided by the Army Corps. The study will help collect additional information about the potential impacts or benefits of such a project. The Army Corps uses a structured process to determine if there is a federal interest to pursue a project and to determine the project costs and benefits. The three components of this process are: 1) the reconnaissance study, 2) the feasibility study, and 3) pre-construction engineering and design. When and if the City's reconnaissance study concludes that there is a federal interest in reconfiguring the breakwater, the City will request federal funding for the Army Corps to undertake a feasibility study to develop conceptual designs and do an environmental assessment.

Site Description: The Long Beach Breakwater is part of an 8.4 mile long breakwater which extends across much of San Pedro Bay. The breakwater has two openings to allow ships to enter the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. These openings divide the breakwater into three sections: the San Pedro Breakwater, the Middle Breakwater, and the Long Beach Breakwater. The San Pedro and Middle breakwaters protect the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach respectively and were constructed between 1899 and 1942. The 2.2 mile Long Beach Breakwater is the eastern most section of the breakwater. The Long Beach breakwater was first authorized in 1930 through the Federal River and Harbor Act. Construction of the breakwater by the federal government began in 1941 and was completed in 1949. The breakwater is 60 feet high and composed of sand and granite boulders.

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Project History: According to the Long Beach Surf Club, surfing in California began in Long Beach in 1911 when two young men brought surfboards back from Waikiki and began surfing at Long Beach. On November 13, 1938 the City of Long Beach hosted the first National Surfing and Paddleboard Championships, inviting surf clubs from California and Hawaii. Men and women competed and 20,000 people crowded onto piers and the beach to watch the competition. On December 3, 1939, the city once again hosted the National Surfing and Paddleboard Championships. However, that was the last national surf contest to be held in Long Beach. The Long Beach Breakwater was constructed in the harbor in the 1940's and there were no more waves when surfers returned after the war.

In 1996 the Long Beach Press Telegram carried a series of articles about the Long Beach Breakwater at a time when the U.S. Navy was closing its facilities in Long Beach, the Long Beach Naval Base and the Long Beach Naval Shipyard. Many people questioned the continued need for the breakwater which they maintained was constructed by the federal government to protect the naval facilities in Long Beach. Surfrider Foundation established a Long Beach chapter at that time and took as its mission the reconfiguration of the breakwater to restore surf to the Long Beach shoreline.

On July 5, 2005, the Long Beach City Council voted to request the federal government conduct a one-year reconnaissance study to determine if there is a federal interest in a study of a reconfiguration of the breakwater. In January 2006, the City submitted a formal appropriations request to Congress for a \$100,000 appropriation to the Army Corps to authorize and fund the study. The appropriation request was not granted in 2006. In January 2007, the City resubmitted the request but again the request was not included in the 2008 appropriations bill.

On July 24, 2007, the City Council voted to direct the City Manager to fund a reconnaissance study. In August 2007, the City formally requested that the Army Corps work with the City to provide the necessary format of the documents which will make up the reconnaissance study, assist in developing the scope of work for the study, help ensure that the work done by a consultant meets Army Corps standards and cooperate with the report preparation efforts. The Army Corps has agreed to provide a format for the study and a sample scope of work.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$ 50,000
City of Long Beach	50,000
TOTAL	\$100,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund (Proposition 40). This funding source may be used for the deployment of funds for the protection water resources in accordance with the provisions of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the

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Resources Code. (Public Resources Code Section 5096.650(b)). Preparation of the proposed reconnaissance study is consistent with this funding source. As discussed below, the project is consistent with Chapters 3 and 6 of Division 21. Proposition 40 also requires the Conservancy to give priority to grant projects with matching funds. (Public Resources Code Section 5096.651). Conservancy funding would be matched by monies from the City of Long Beach.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with Section 31111 of the Public Resources Code, which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to public agencies and non-profit organizations to undertake plans and feasibility studies in implementing Division 21.

Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270) provides for the Conservancy's participation in a program of coastal resource enhancement. The proposed authorization will assist the Conservancy in meeting its purposes and objectives in Sections 31251-31270 by facilitating the possible enhancement of coastal resources in an area where they have become very degraded.

Pursuant to Section 31251, the Conservancy may award grants to local agencies to enhance coastal resources that, because of natural or human-induced events, have suffered loss of natural and scenic values. Section 31252 requires that a local coastal program indicate the areas proposed for enhancement are in need of public action. The breakwater is a federally-owned structure located in San Pedro Bay and there are no policies directly addressing the breakwater in the City's local coastal program (LCP). The impact of the breakwater in eliminating surf and reducing beach use is, however, discussed in the LCP. The LCP notes that the breakwater has "totally changed the character of the beaches. ...the shore is more like a lakefront than an ocean. The real effect of this metamorphosis is unknown, but it is believed to be of significant proportions." The City has identified the need for public funding to address these impacts.

Consistent with Section 31253, the amount of proposed Conservancy funding for this project was determined by the total amount of funding available for coastal resource enhancement projects, the fiscal resources of project partners and the urgency of the project relative to other eligible coastal resource enhancement projects. The City has contributed significant staff time to assessing the break water and requested that the Conservancy provide matching funds to enable the City to develop the reconnaissance study which could attract federal money to the project. Additionally, this project was rated highly when the factors identified in Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines were applied, as discussed below.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective 6E** and **6F**, the proposed authorization may lead to the improvement of water quality which will benefit coastal resources. Goal 6 calls for the development and implementation of projects to restore coastal and marine ecosystems and improve water quality. Objectives 6E and 6F specifically recommend the development of plans (6E) to improve water quality to benefit coastal resources and implementation (6F) of such plans. The proposed reconnaissance study would address water quality improvements in San Pedro Bay and along the Long Beach shoreline as a possible benefit of the proposed reconfiguration of the breakwater.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on September 20, 2007, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** The proposed project is supported by many individuals and groups in Long Beach.
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone.
5. **Need:** The City has been unable to secure other funding for the project. The City of Long Beach has requested Conservancy funding for the reconnaissance study in order to leverage federal money toward this project.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Improved water quality and increased tidal action would benefit the San Pedro Bay ecosystem and might improve the attractiveness of the beaches of Long Beach to inland residents and visitors from other areas.

Additional Criteria

1. **Urgency:** After over ten years of discussion, the City of Long Beach has decided to proceed with a study of removing or altering the breakwater. If the Conservancy does

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not support the project, the momentum from the recent City Council decision to proceed with the study would be lost.

2. **Resolution of more than one issue:** “Sinking” or reconfiguring the breakwater may help resolve poor water quality, improve habitat and increase visitor numbers at Long Beach beaches.
3. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above. In addition, it is hoped that a federal interest will be found to provide additional funding to reconfigure the breakwater.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE COASTAL ACT:

The proposed authorization is consistent with the planning and management policies contained in Section 30231 of the Public Resources Code, which states that “[t]he biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored. . .” The proposed project, if implemented, would likely benefit coastal zone resources as a result of improved water quality and improved tidal action in San Pedro Bay.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from the provisions of CEQA under 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262 in that it involves planning studies for possible future actions, which the Conservancy has not approved or funded. These plans do not have a legally binding effect on later activities to be selected or implemented. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of the proposed authorization.